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A COAT OF MAIL.

IN Ireland, once, I saw a stately grove
Of great oak-trees, a hundred full years old ;
And round their shoulders clung a curving coil,
Thick with a strong arm’s thickness three times told !

It was the ivy, that in years gone by
Had grappled to the oak with dragon’s strength,
Intent to drain its sap, and clog its growth,
Till it should strangle all its life at length.

But, stronger than the giant force of Fate,
The great oak’s will to live began to stir,
Made of its sap a new encircling bark,
And took the parasite a prisoner !

And so, thrice strengthened to all future time,
The tree resists the tempest and the hail ;
Its foeman’s force is welded to its own
In an enduring harmony of mail !

E’en so, my heart, within the clutch of Care,
Which, mounting once, seemed like to drag thee down,
Thou findest now thy foeman an ally,
Thine armament, thine honor, thy renown !

THE MID-DAY PEAL.

THE bells swung out into music,
Mid-day they pealed from the church-tower gray ;
And oh ! it was so they were ringing
When my life set out on its wandering way !

It was close to the old year’s ending,
When an angel kind bent over my head,
And sighed, as she pointed gently
The way that the path of my pilgrimage led.

“Through a waste land, thorny with briers,
’Neath a heaven of storm and of clouds of snow,
Beset by cares and by terrors,
The course of your life must onward go.

“But follow the sound of the bells, child;
Be fearless still with a joyous might:
Let their music banish your sorrow,
And fill you with courage to face the fight!

“And then, in the day of reckoning,
The Bells of High Heaven shall your welcome ring,
And your weary heart shall be happy
With the peace and the slumber their echoes bring.”

TO BACH.

COME, let me plunge beneath thy mighty wave;
Immerse me in the current of thy mind;
Thy thoughts, which spread like branches intertwined,
All let me know! Thy guiding hand I crave!
Thy voice shall cheer my pathway to the grave,
Like springing water in a cavern blind,
Or in white desert some oasis kind.
My care to live thy harmony shall save.
Thy meaning, Master, let me comprehend;
Upon thy giant form mine eyes would gaze;
Toward thy basalt dome my feet would press!
O, let my prayers thy Temple-steps ascend,
Mine ears enjoy thy heavenly Hymn of Praise,
Till all my soul forget its weariness!